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BYE # 44009-66-b

4 / 8 October 1966

~~DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION~~

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Certain Political Aspects of OXCART Project

I. General

1. In general, we believe that most governments would not prove receptive to US proposals that they cooperate in a program of Oxcart flights -- particularly since we assume that they would be told, or in any case suspect, that such flights would be targetted against the USSR. In the case of certain close US allies, those in the governments who are most concerned with intelligence and military strategy would no doubt press their political superiors to cooperate; and some of the latter might sympathize with the objectives of the effort. However, except as noted below, we believe that the political chiefs would prefer that their countries not be involved and, in effect, would hope that the US would either decide not to conduct the program, or would make arrangements for carrying it out which did not include them. Certain governments might be somewhat more receptive to ~~proposals for granting the US~~ overflight rights, or cooperating in refueling arrangements, ~~but~~ ^{than they would be asked to permit staging or recovery on their territories,} ^{form of information} almost none would be enthusiastic and actual agreement would depend on cases, as discussed below.

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For insertion in Para. 2

Any government which the US approached would reflect upon the strong Soviet reactions to the U-2 overflight of May 1960. These governments would remember the extraordinarily harsh tone of Khrushchev's remonstrances to all of the states with which the Soviets knew that the US had arrangements in support of U-2 operations. They would probably estimate that the Soviet reactions would be even harsher this time.

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2. Some friendly governments would strongly question the need or desirability of these flights in principle -- having in mind the heightened East-West tensions resulting from the U-2 crisis of 1960, the subsequent public undertakings by President Eisenhower and President Kennedy that overflights of the USSR would not be undertaken, ~~and~~ ^{they will also take account of} the commonly known fact that the US is using satellite reconnaissance -- which would seem to them to do the job with few of the risks. ^{W3. Beyond these considerations,} ~~there is a~~ widespread belief -- much more evident and pervasive than in the '50s or early '60s -- that the danger of the Soviets initiating war is small; in the minds of many governments, including those in NATO, this belief not only argues against the urgency of increasing intelligence coverage on the USSR, but also fortifies their inclination not to risk reviving even greater East-West tensions -- especially since they are already worried over the effects of Vietnam on US-Soviet relations. Some friendly governments would feel more strongly on these matters than would others, and there are of course important differences between them in terms of their own freedom of action (e.g., ^{in terms of political accountability in case something went wrong or the public opinion} ~~with respect to constitutional requirements,~~ the importance and orientation of public opinion, numbers of people to be consulted, and the like).

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